

# RL 24

**PAYNE:** This well-known and long-established class exploits the virtues of length, and has only modest breadth and height. This seems to pay off in sailing performance, and probably the main appeal of the boat is its performance.

The boats are thought of somewhat as a racing class and the design seems very suitable. Many larger keel yachts do not sail as well. The boat we sailed seemed nicely balanced, and the arrangement of rudder blade and tiller was such that only a light helm pressure was needed.

In fact, taken all round, this was one of the nicest-steering of all the boats we tried. However, I think this had a lot to do with the way the demonstration boat was carefully sailed at around 15 degrees of heel.

The boat has a 180kg cast-iron drop-keel which seems to give good stability in combination with the flat-floored hull. The keynotes of the RL24 seem to be simplicity and an emphasis on sailing performance rather than on cabin accommodation. The boat has very much the flavour of a big skiff with a heavy centreboard and seems very good of its kind. However, it was emphasised to me that the boat is quite suitable for beginners, and for cruising, and so far as hull and rig are concerned, I quite agree.



**WEBSTER:** The RL24 quite frankly, won the trailering section of the Rally hands down. It was by far the easiest craft to launch, with a most impressive launch — with the wheels of the trailer a metre away from the water's edge. For once the advertising blurbs are right; the RL24 could indeed be launched on the proverbial dewy lawn!

To complete a most impressive demonstration, Sydney agent Mike Stevens then proceeded (alone) to prepare the RL24 for sailing in an excellent 9 minutes and 12 seconds.

The main criticism of the RL24 concerned the fiddling involved lifting the outboard in and out of its special well — you can't have the outboard down in the drive position for launching because it (obviously) sticks out below the bottom of the yacht, but the size of the well precludes tilting the motor out of the way — it has to be completely lifted out. That's a bit of a bind, but at least it only happens once or twice a day.

The internal layout of the RL24 is quite conventional. There are berths for 4-5 people depending on their enthusiasm for one another, and a central eating area around flaps extending off the centreboard case. Perhaps the best thing is the freezer chest — it's one of the few that will take a decent amount of provisions for a weekend on the water. Toilet facilities are in the open, between bunks, a situation that requires a screen for privacy. Double berths can be fitted forward, but they will of necessity, pass over the toilet.

The cockpit of the RL24 is larger than most and quite well laid out. No pop top is fitted, the hatch sliding right forward to the mast step. An unusual feature of the RL24 is the sunken anchor well on the foredeck — an ideal spot for youngsters to perch in some safety where they are out of harm's way, but within easy reach and observation.

It's not too surprising that the RL24 sail numbers are measured in multiple hundreds. This is a practical family yacht, with some very good features, including a little more space than some of the other yachts in this Rally.



**DAVIDSON:** The RL 24 was certainly one of the fastest of the contenders, though the fact that it was also the longest should not be forgotten. The hull owes much to skiff thinking in its shape and low wetted surface area, and its acceleration and instant response to sail and helm tuning bares this out. The boat was easy to sail, with the mainsheet traveller across the centre of the cockpit and the sheet winches on the cabin top. To get the most out of the boat you should sail at about 15 degrees of heel and spin wind past this point. As the RL heels past 15 degrees easily in gusts, a fair amount of sheet and traveller control is necessary. When hit by gusts, the boat leans smoothly and shows no marked tendency to round up. The tiller remains light and though not particularly stiff, the boat is very controllable and predictable. My gripes are that the cockpit coamings aren't comfortable to sit on when heeled, and the centreboard control wire aperture leaks water into the cabin.

The RL looks as though it has been conceived from the outside in. The deck moulding is good, with plenty of non skid where you need it. The cockpit is huge but the siting of the mainsheet traveller effectively cuts it in half. The outboard well is neat but you cannot tilt the motor without first removing it from the bracket — a fault that some owners remedy adjust by cutting the aperture away a bit more. Below decks the RL is finished with a carpet type liner which helps the neat but basic appearance of the boat. General finish is good, with the attention to detail more evident on deck than below.

## RL24:

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